1957: Year that was

❑ THE Governments of India and Pakistan conclude a Film Trade Agreement on January 22, under which Pakistan allows 10 Bengali films and seven Hindi/Urdu films from India on an outright sale basis.

❑ The import duty on exposed film is increased by 100 per cent. And the duty on cine equipment is hiked from five per cent to 10 per cent.

❑ A control on raw film is imposed on June 7, under the Essential Commodities Act. Anybody holding stock in excess of 5,000 ft is required to declare the information to the Joint Controller of Import and Export.

❑ Central and Regional Advisory Committees are formed by the government. These include representatives from the Film Federation of India and other producer's organisations. They are set up to advise the government on the distribution of raw film.

❑ Raj Kapoor's *Jagte Raho* receives the Grand Prix awards at the 10th International Film Festival, Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia.

❑ *Jaldeep*, a children's film, is awarded the first prize at the 9th International Exhibition of Films for Children, Venice.

❑ *Pardesi*, the first Indo-Soviet co-production directed by Khwaja Ahmed Abbas and Vassily M Pronin, is made. The Russian version is also made but it is shorter — only 76 minutes.

❑ Nimmi marries Ali Raza.

❑ Film-maker Amiya Chakravarty, comedian Gope, and actress Roopa Burman die. Burman is found dead in a Frontier Mail coach, near Delhi.

Hit films of the year:

❑ ***Mother India* Dir: Mehboob Khan**

THIS film, which has now acquired the status of an epic, is the tale of Radha (Nargis) who leads a happy life with her husband (Raj Kumar) and three sons in a village. The family has to work extremely hard to pay off an avaricious landlord, Sukhilal (Kanhaiyalal). Radha's husband has an accident and he loses both his arms. Later he dies, leaving her to raise the children. She also has to deal with financial and sexual pressure from Sukhilal. Her youngest son dies in a flood and the family is left homeless after all their possessions are wiped out. Her other son Birju (Sunil Dutt) grows up to become a rebellious and violent young man while Ramu (Rajendra Kumar) remains dutiful and devoted.

In the end, a long suffering Mother India puts an end to her rebellious son's activities by killing him, fertilising the soil with his blood. The film is a remake of Mehboob's own film *Aurat* (1940).

❑ ***Pyaasa* Dir: Guru Dutt**

GURU Dutt's classic melodrama was the first in a series of films addressing the state of the nation. Vijay (Guru Dutt) is an unsuccessful poet whose work is sold by his brothers as waste paper. Unable to bear the rejection of his talent, he elects to live on the streets. A young prostitute, Gulab (Waheeda Rehman) falls in love with him and his poetry, while his former girlfriend Meena (Mala Sinha) marries an arrogant publisher, Mr Ghosh (Rehman), for comfort and security. When a dead beggar to whom Vijay gives his coat is mistaken for Vijay, Gulab has his poetry published in a book which becomes a best seller. Everyone who previously rejected Vijay now gathers to pay tribute to the dead poet. Vijay disrupts the celebration with a passionate song denouncing hypocrisy and calling for violent destruction of a corrupt world — *'Jalaa do ise phoonk daalo yeh duniya'*.

SOUL MAN: Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* denouncing hypocrisy was a hit

❑ ***Naya Daur* Dir: B R Chopra**

A melodrama about the perils of progress: Villain Kundan (Jeevan) introduces an electric saw mill and cars into an isolated, sylvan village. And the economic, caste and religious divisions between the rural folk are woven into the main story of the rivalry between Shankar (Dilip Kumar) and Krishna (Ajit) over the heroine Rajani (Vyjayanthimala). The dramatic high point sees everyone joining forces to build a road to prove that traditional technology is just as good as new machinery. Ironically, the nationalist modernisation argument is advanced by the villain while the benevolent father figure Seth Maganlal (Nasir Hussain) hopes that a humanist attitude will abolish all class divisions. The hero Shankar argues for collectivisation as the proletarian way of managing new technology. The film has O P Nayyar's classic compositions, *'Reshmi salwar kurta jaali ka'*, *'Saathi haath badhana'* *'MainBambai ka babu'*

❑ ***Aasha* Dir: M V Raman.**

Partly made in colour, this love story and crime drama is a comic variation of the Hamlet theme. The story revolve around an old landowner. Hasmukhlal (Om Prakash) his son Kishore (Kishore Kumar) who is accused of murder, and the villain Raj (Pran) who is Kishore's cousin. The love object is Nirmala (Vyjayanthimala), the niece of a millionaire coveted by Raj. Kishore, masquerading as an Arab, launches a theatre company and resolves the conflict by performing a play in front of the real life character to whom the fiction is addressed. The song *'Eena Meena Deeka'* sung by Kishore Kumar and Asha Bhosle in two different versions becomes very popular.

❑ ***Do Aankhen Barah Haath* Dir: V Shantaram**

This is a stylised parable about human virtue. An idealistic cop Adinath (V Shantaram), believing people to be fundamentally good, takes six simple-minded murderers to a desolate area to set up a farming commune.

In spite of the threat of violence, they run a good farm and come into conflict with the virtuous citizens of a nearby village who see their economic interests threatened. They reveal themselves to be the real villains. Sandhya plays Champa, a seller of children's toys who befriends the prisoners — the only woman in an oppressively male world.